

Amendments to the Claims:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1-49. (Canceled)

50. (New) A method in a computer system for analyzing data produced for legal purposes, the method comprising:

receiving, from an external information system, a plurality of electronic files that are subject to a legal proceeding, the electronic files produced by at least one party involved in the legal proceeding;

storing the received electronic files in a searchable format;

storing and indexing metadata associated with the received electronic files;

receiving a request for electronic files having a specified characteristic; and

processing the indexed metadata to determine a set of electronic files having the specified characteristic.

51. (New) The method of claim 50, further comprising returning an indication of the determined set of electronic files.

52. (New) The method of claim 51 wherein returning the indication of the set of electronic files includes returning a list of electronic files that contain content matching the specified characteristic.

53. (New) The method of claim 50 wherein storing and indexing the metadata includes storing and indexing the metadata in a database.

54. (New) The method of claim 50 wherein storing the received electronic files in the searchable format includes storing the received electronic files in a searchable text format.

55. (New) The method of claim 50 wherein the legal proceeding is at least one of a discovery proceeding that is part of a lawsuit, a mergers and acquisitions proceeding, and a due diligence effort.

56. (New) The method of claim 50 wherein receiving the plurality of electronic files that are subject to the legal proceeding, the electronic files produced by at least one party involved in the legal proceeding, comprises:

receiving, from the external information system, at least some electronic files that have been previously sent from the at least one party to another party prior to commencement of the legal proceeding, the external information system belonging to the at least one party of the legal proceeding and having stored therein these electronic files; and

receiving, at the computer system during the legal proceeding, these stored electronic files from the external information system that belongs to the at least one party, the computer system not belonging to any party of the legal proceeding.

57. (New) The method of claim 50 wherein the received electronic files include stored emails, and wherein storing and indexing metadata associated with the received electronic files includes storing and indexing threading information associated with the emails.

58. (New) The method of claim 50 wherein receiving the plurality of electronic files that are subject to the legal proceeding from the external information system includes receiving at least one of an electronic calendar, electronic schedule, spreadsheet, word-processing file, electronic files arranged in a directory structure, and graphical data from the external information system.

59. (New) The method of claim 50 wherein storing and indexing metadata associated with the received electronic files includes storing and indexing metadata associated with a native format of the received electronic files.

60. (New) The method of claim 50, further comprising:
recursively extracting the plurality of electronic files from a data structure provided from the external information system;
obtaining and indexing the metadata from each of the recursively extracted electronic files;
converting the recursively extracted electronic files to a read-only format; and
indexing textual content of the recursively extracted electronic files to provide the searchable format.

61. (New) The method of claim 60 wherein at least some of the recursively extracted electronic files include emails having attachments, the method further comprising:
storing the emails in a read-only format and in the searchable format;
separately storing the attachments in a read-only format and in a searchable format; and
storing and indexing metadata associated with the attachments.

62. (New) The method of claim 60 wherein recursively extracting the plurality of electronic files from the data structure provided from the external information system includes recursively extracting the plurality of electronic files from a storage medium delivered from the external information system in response to a production request during the legal proceeding.

63. (New) The method of claim 60 wherein recursively extracting the plurality of electronic files includes recursively extracting the plurality of electronic files using application programs that can read and translate the electronic files.

64. (New) The method of claim 50, further comprising providing a user interface to display, and through which to apply annotations to, the electronic files having the specified characteristic and that are responsive to the request.

65. (New) The method of claim 64 wherein the annotations include at least one of a reviewed, privileged, hot, responsive, and witness preparation selections provided via the user interface.

66. (New) The method of claim 50, further comprising providing summary information indicative of electronic files that are available to be processed to determine the set of electronic files having the specified characteristic.

67. (New) The method of claim 50, further comprising processing the electronic files in the searchable format to determine the set of electronic files having the specified characteristic.

68. (New) The method of claim 50 wherein receiving the request for electronic files having a specified characteristic includes receiving a request that specifies at least one of the following: a word in an electronic file, a sender of an email, a recipient of an email, a subject of an email, a date associated with an electronic file, properties information associated with the electronic file, an annotation to an electronic file, attachment information, a case identification, and a collection name.

69. (New) A method in a computer system for analyzing data produced for legal purposes, the method comprising:

receiving, from an external information system, a plurality of electronic files that are subject to a legal proceeding, the electronic files produced by at least one party involved in the legal proceeding and stored in a data structure in the external information system prior to being received at the computer system;

recursively extracting the plurality of electronic files, received from the external information system, from the data structure;

obtaining and indexing metadata from each of the recursively extracted electronic files;

converting the recursively extracted electronic files to a readable format; and

indexing content of the recursively extracted electronic files to provide a searchable format.

70. (New) The method of claim 69 wherein receiving the plurality of electronic files that are subject to the legal proceeding comprises:

receiving, from the external information system, at least some electronic files that have been sent from the at least one party to another party prior to commencement of the legal proceeding, the external information system belonging to the at least one party of the legal proceeding and having stored in the data structure these electronic files; and

receiving, at the computer system during the legal proceeding, the data structure from the external information system belonging to the at least one party and having these electronic files stored therein, the computer system not belonging to any party of the legal proceeding.

71. (New) The method of claim 69 wherein the received electronic files include emails, at least some of which have attachments, the method further comprising:

storing the emails in a readable format and in the searchable format;

separately storing the attachments in a readable format and in a searchable format; and

storing and indexing metadata associated with the attachments.

72. (New) The method of claim 71 wherein obtaining and indexing metadata from each of the recursively extracted electronic files includes obtaining and indexing threading information associated with the emails.

73. (New) The method of claim 69 wherein recursively extracting the electronic files from the data structure comprises:

determining which versions of applications can respectively read the electronic files in the data structure; and

using the determined versions of the applications to read their respective electronic files.

74. (New) The method of claim 69, further comprising:

receiving a query for electronic files having a specified characteristic;

returning a response to the query, the response being indicative of electronic files that have the specified characteristic; and

presenting a copy of at least one of these electronic files in a user interface along with legal annotation selections to apply to that copy of that electronic file.

75. (New) An article of manufacture for a computer system, the article of manufacture comprising:

a machine-readable medium having instructions stored thereon to cause a processor to analyze data produced for legal purposes, by:

loading, from an external information system, a plurality of electronic files that are subject to a legal proceeding, the electronic files produced by at least one party involved in the legal proceeding and stored in a data structure in the external information system prior to being loaded at the computer system;

recursively extracting the plurality of electronic files, loaded from the external information system, from the data structure;

obtaining and indexing metadata from each of the recursively extracted electronic files;

converting the recursively extracted electronic files to a readable format; and

indexing content of the recursively extracted electronic files to provide a searchable format.

76. (New) The article of manufacture of claim 75 wherein the instructions to load the electronic files include instructions to:

load, from the external information system, at least some electronic files that have been sent from the at least one party to another party prior to commencement of the legal proceeding, the external information system belonging to the at least one party of the legal proceeding and having stored in the data structure these electronic files; and

load, at the computer system during the legal proceeding, the data structure from the external information system belonging to the at least one party and having these electronic files stored therein, the computer system not belonging to any party of the legal proceeding.

77. (New) The article of manufacture of claim 75 wherein the loaded electronic files include emails, at least some of which have attachments, the machine-readable medium further including instructions stored thereon to:

store the emails in a readable format and in the searchable format;

separately store the attachments in a readable format and in a searchable format;
and

storing and indexing metadata associated with the attachments and threading information associated with the emails.

78. (New) The article of manufacture of claim 75 wherein the loaded electronic files includes at least one of an electronic calendar, electronic schedule, spreadsheet, word-processing file, electronic files arranged in a directory structure, and graphical data.

79. (New) A computer system for analyzing data produced for legal purposes, the computer system comprising:

a means for receiving, from an external information system, a plurality of electronic files that are subject to a legal proceeding, the electronic files produced by at least one party involved in the legal proceeding;

a means for storing the received electronic files in a searchable format;

a means for storing and indexing metadata associated with the received electronic files;

a means for receiving a request for electronic files having a specified characteristic; and

a means for processing the indexed metadata to determine a set of electronic files having the specified characteristic.

80. (New) The computer system of claim 79, further comprising a means for returning an indication of the determined set of electronic files and for presenting summary information.

81. (New) The computer system of claim 79 wherein the means for receiving the plurality of electronic files that are subject to the legal proceeding, the electronic files produced by at least one party involved in the legal proceeding, comprises:

a means for loading, from the external information system, at least some electronic files that have been previously sent from the at least one party to another party prior to commencement of the legal proceeding, the external information system belonging to the at least one party of the legal proceeding and having stored therein these electronic files; and

a means for loading, at the computer system during the legal proceeding, these stored electronic files from the external information system that belongs to the at least one party, the computer system not belonging to any party of the legal proceeding.

82. (New) The computer system of claim 79, further comprising:

a means for recursively extracting the plurality of electronic files from a data structure provided from the external information system;

a means for obtaining and indexing the metadata from each of the recursively extracted electronic files;

a means for converting the recursively extracted electronic files to a read-only format; and

a means for indexing textual content of the recursively extracted electronic files to provide the searchable format.

83. (New) The computer system of claim 79 wherein at least some of the recursively extracted electronic files include emails having attachments, the computer system further comprising:

a means for storing the emails in a read-only format and in the searchable format;
a means for separately storing the attachments in a read-only format and in a searchable format; and
a means for storing and indexing metadata associated with the attachments.

84. (New) The computer system of claim 79, further comprising a user interface means for generating the request and for presenting an indication of the set of electronic files having the specified characteristic, the user interface means including a means for adding annotations to a copy of an electronic file presented thereon.

85. (New) A computer system to analyze data produced for legal purposes, the computer system comprising:

at least one recursive engine to receive, from an external information system, a plurality of electronic files that are subject to a legal proceeding, the electronic files produced by at least one party involved in the legal proceeding and stored in a storage medium, and to extract the plurality of electronic files from the storage medium;

a first server unit coupled to the recursive engine to store the received electronic files in a searchable format;

a second server unit coupled to the recursive engine to store and index metadata associated with the received electronic files; and

an engine in communication with the first and second server units to receive a request for electronic files having a specified characteristic and to process the indexed metadata to determine a set of electronic files having the specified characteristic.

86. (New) The computer system of claim 85, further comprising at least one application that can read a format of the received electronic files.

87. (New) The computer system of claim 85 wherein the received electronic files include emails, at least some of which have attachments, the computer system further including:

at least one controller coupled to the recursive engine to determine which server unit to send the extracted electronic files; and

a third server unit coupled to the controller to store the emails in the readable format and to separately store the attachments in the readable format, wherein the first server unit stores the attachment a searchable format and wherein the second server unit stores and index metadata associated with the attachments and threading information associated with the emails.

88. (New) The computer system of claim 85, further comprising a first administration program to generate a directory structure in the first server unit that indexes text data stored therein.

89. (New) The computer system of claim 88, further comprising a second administration program to generate catalog and directory parameters that reference the directory structure in the first server unit and the text data stored therein.

90. (New) The computer system of claim 85, further comprising at least one administration program to generate catalog and database parameters that reference the second server unit and the metadata stored therein.

91. (New) The computer system of claim 85, further comprising another server unit, coupled between a client terminal and the engine, to receive the request from the client terminal and to pass the request to the engine to allow the engine to apply the specified

characteristic in the request to at least one of the first and second server units to the database, the engine being configured to return responsive results of the request the another server unit.

92. (New) The computer system of claim 91 wherein the another server unit includes a virtual directory to reference data stored in the first and second server units.

93. (New) The computer system of claim 85, further comprising:
a server having the engine and the first and second server units;
a user authentication unit communicatively coupled to the server to control access to the server;
a user information unit communicatively coupled to the server to store information associated with users authenticated by and provided with access by the user authentication unit; and
an administration unit to support services between the server and the user authentication and user information units.

94. (New) The computer system of claim 93 wherein the server supports legal annotation tools on a user interface that is arranged to present a copy of an electronic document that has the specified characteristic.

95. (New) The computer system of claim 85 wherein the first and second server units comprise part of a database system.